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THE WORLD

AND ITS

INFLUENCES.

WRITTEN FOR THE BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

By W. M. E.

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TO THE READER.

This little book has been prepared for your special use, and it has been made purposely brief in the hope that you might be induced to spare the very short time which its perusal may require. The writer has at least the advantage of some experience to justify his expostulations, and if his general impressions of the world, as derived from his contact with it for

many years, may avail in engaging your attention, and awakening your thoughtful consideration, he will be amply compensated for his labour—which, for your welfare, has been a "labour of love."

W. M. E.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

THE WORLD AS SEEN BY ITS VOTARIES BEFORE TRIAL. - - - - - - - - 9

CHAPTER II.

THE WORLD REGARDED IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION. - - - - - - - 32

CHAPTER III.

THE WORLD AS ESTIMATED BY ITS VOTARIES AFTER A TRIAL OF ITS PURSUITS. - - 51

CHAPTER IV.

THE WORLD IN COMPARISON WITH THE BETTER WAY. - - - - - - - - 85

The World

AS VIEWED BY ITS VOTARIES

BEFORE TRIAL.

CHAPTER I.

IN the first exercise of our consciousness, we find ourselves dwellers upon earth. The first objects which attract us are its material structure and animated inhabitants; and for a series of years, commencing with infancy, we are occupied in obtaining a knowledge of the novelties which surround us. The eye gazes on new scenes and the ear catches strange sounds, and as the sphere of observation enlarges, the

overarching firmament and the outspread landscape bring to the view new revelations of beauty. The material world, with all its variety of objects, becomes the subject of engaging study, and the eye is gradually educated in determining distance, proportion, colour, and general harmony. The external senses have each their respective province. The eye is arrested by forms of beauty, the ear charmed by musical cadences, fragrant odours minister to another sense, and taste and feeling are the inlets to many pleasurable sensations. Regarded as mere sentient beings, it is natural, that from our first introduction into the world, we should form a high estimate of its capabilities for producing enjoyment, and be exhilarated by the

thought that it is to be our place of residence. So bright are its prospects and so winning its proffered friendship, that no suspicion is awakened that its glowing horizon may ever be clouded.

The first experiences of life are thus sensuous, and its earliest enjoyments lay the foundation of those attachments which are to be ripened into habits. The gradual development of the rational life, in the exercise of our reasoning and reflective faculties, will necessarily modify, without correcting, our first impressions. Youth, with its inherent buoyancy, evades the sage counsels of the more experienced, and is reluctant to learn what it is unwilling to know. The pictured beauties of a glowing imagination have all the form and colour-

ing of reality which is not destined to fade away and die. To the senses they appear substantial; why suffer reason to interpose to prove their evanescence?

Advancing life will, however, bring disquieting lessons. The transitoriness of present objects of pursuit will be exemplified. Who has not experienced childhood's first griefs, as an anticipated pleasure has failed, or a bright hope been disappointed? And yet, the tear soon dried on the cheek, and the clouded face resuming its smiles, the alert mind springs forward in the race with new vigour, attributing the temporary interruption to accident rather than necessity. The lesson has been communicated, but not learned. So deeply engrafted is the conviction that this world is all-sufficient

for human happiness, that it will require many such lessons to counteract it. What is usually styled the thougthlessness of youth, is rather an obstinate determination to think in its own way, and according to its cherished tastes.

So early commences the idolatrous devotion to external things, that even a daily recurring death, which is the palpable sundering of earthly ties, and the demonstrative proof of the instability of human enjoyments, fails to make its due impression, and the tide runs on as if it were never to ebb. To the living, and especially to the living, ardent youth, death is an accident which may be evaded, or averted, or, at least, indefinitely postponed. As a personal concern it is only seen in dim perspective.

The earliest pleasures being those of sense, the conviction too often results, that the gratification of the animal propensities constitutes the chief, if not the only, happiness of life. Thinking, feeling, and acting in unison with this impression, lead to the formation of habits which give a colouring to the future life, and "grow with the growth and strengthen with the strength." Tastes are then formed; thought receives its direction, and the affections select their objects of preference. Hence it is that little is observed in the fully developed man which was not previously seen in the boy. The same intense earnestness of purpose, the same absorbing pursuit of present gratification, and the same restiveness under opposition, are characteristic of

both. The impulse of the boy is to be above and beyond control, impatient of discipline, eager for amusement, and anxious to give full scope to his love and pursuit of pleasure.*

Some may regard this as innocent, as well as natural, and be unwilling to apply any stringent check; but nothing can be more evident than that character, for all

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* The child foreshadows the man in its devotion to appetite and love of dress, in its furious outbursts of passion, its excited interest in games of chance, and anxiety to win the little property of its companion, its jealousies, quarrels, and defiances of reproof. Here is the embryo glutton, lover of fashion, duelist, gambler, and reckless disturber of society. How can it be otherwise without a gracious change? The tree may be judged by its first fruits, as well as by the products of its maturer growth.

future life, is thus receiving its formative attributes, which time will settle into fixedness. We might here suggest, although aside from our specific object, that parental training must be commenced early to be effectual. Indiscreet delay will place the subject beyond control. Children are born with the world in them; and the ascendency it acquires over their habits of thought and feeling, is alarmingly rapid.

As youth ripens into manhood, the influence of the world grows up with it. Its views have been but little sobered by experience; nor has judgment acquired the requisite skill to discriminate between the true and the false. Still the thoughts are bounded by an earthly horizon, and the track beaten by the march of those who

have gone before, is pursued. To account for the uniformity of this result, by the force of the imitative principle, is not sufficient. It is due to a much more potent influence than that of example. An obscured reason, a perverted judgment, or in a word, a vitiated nature is alone capable of solving the enigma. Why, among the countless millions of the human family, do we find none who are naturally attracted to God, as the sum of all excellency? Why are not the native tendencies of the heart to love him, earnestly covet his presence and fellowship, and to rejoice in his service? Why are the affections so estranged from him that God is not permitted to be in all the thoughts? And why is it that the uncertain tenure of earthly things, and

their demonstrated incompetency to meet the earnest longings of our nature, fail to produce the conviction of their insufficiency? While the rational faculties are held in subjection to the animal instincts and are forbidden to assert their superiority, no adequate explanation of the fact can be suggested but that which supposes an inherent vice in the nature, which theologically is described as "the want of original righteousness and the corruption of the whole nature." "God created man upright, but he has sought out many inventions." Endowed with immortality and designed for the highest exercises of rational being, he has become earthly, sensual, grovelling.

Thus possessing a common nature, and

that degenerate, we are led to look for that very uniformity in absorbing, worldly pursuits, which, in actual life, we observe. This community of nature may be, and is, modified by differences in constitutional temperament. With diversity of tastes and pursuits there is a common proclivity and a similar misdirection. The ultimate aim of all men is happiness, and yet the pursuit of it is in different directions; and, until the views are corrected by a heavenly instruction, all alike mistake the true method of reaching the goal. The first radical error is in the mistaken judgment formed of the nature of happiness itself; or the kind of happiness adapted to our peculiar constitution, as rational and immortal creatures. If man differs from brutes and is

superior to them in nature and position, his aims should be loftier and his gratifications more refined and rational. As mere animals, they are prone to indulgences suited to the low level of their nature, and as creatures of no hereafter, the enjoyment of the present comprehends the whole aim and end of their being. With no rational instincts, no noble aspirations, no reflection, no conscience, or sense of accountability, no faculty for holding intercourse with the Deity, health, protection, rest and the gratification of appetite constitute their highest bliss. Not so man. He is differently endowed, and hence he grievously errs when, with some unimportant modifications, he has no loftier aim than the beasts that perish; when to eat, drink and

be merry are his chosen pleasures; and in all his speculations and plans for happiness, his eye never sees beyond the murky atmosphere of earth. He is in pursuit of a purchasable commodity for present use, a frail flower of earthly growth, which is captivating to the sense and then destined to wither and die.

It is no difficult task to sum up the inventory of the world's enjoyments. No acute analysis is requisite to expose them in all their superficial worthlessness. There is first the "lust of the flesh," or the lawless and libertine indulgence of natural appetites, useful as servants, but oppressive as task-masters. "The eye," in which ever direction it turns, is saluted by these types of the mere animal man—the caterer to

its own "lust." In their paradise, the chambers of imagery are crowded with pictured licentiousness; rich and luxurious viands are spread out to pamper and glut their fleshly desires; music is heard in their feasts; and the shout of the reveller—the false pretence of cheerfulness—breaks in upon the midnight hour. Then, too, there is the love of ostentatious show; for the "pride of life" is intimately associated with "the lust of the flesh." Nature and art are alike placed under contribution.

How intimately is happiness supposed to be associated with the palatial mansion, the gorgeous equipage, the costly dress! How busy is taste in accumulating rich paintings, statuary and other objects of *virtu!* Surrounded by everything that

can attract the eye by beauty, or soothe the ear with harmony, where every sense is regaled and every taste ministered to, will not contentment come as a matter of course?

Others again, perhaps, having tried the former method ineffectually, may turn into the paths of a higher ambition. Their proudest aspirations are for exalted position and influence. Successful literature may point to a noble eminence from which the aspirant may look down on his fellows in proud triumph; or heroism points out the path to glory, while fame, with its brazen trump, heralds the victor's triumphs; or a wide field of exciting enterprise lies open to the politician who aims to control the state and dispense patronage. The gaze, the plau-

dits, and even the envy of the crowd are coveted as a substantial reward.

Or, in a different direction, the votaries of pleasure are impelled by the gratifications which entertainments and amusements proffer. Scenic representations, the music of the opera, expensive fêtes, the mazy dance, and games of chance are the antidotes to *tædium vitæ*, or corroding ennui. These are recurred to as the fancy may dictate, and in perpetual round. And then if their interest declines and the spirits flag, foreign travel, with its novel sights and new phases of life, may afford agreeable change and relaxation. Pleasures at home producing satiety, the pleasures abroad are in reserve. How various the resources of the worldling, and what a plenitude of happiness do they

promise! Will anything but a sour cynicism deny their rich diversity, or question their efficacy?

The streams which flow from the fountains of worldly pleasure are not to be participated in without money or price. Each devotee is to come with the price in his hand. Wealth has an acknowledged potency; its golden key is supposed to have the power of unlocking every portal of the temple. Social position, influence, and present gratification are the commodities for which it bids. Hence its acquisition becomes an idolatry, as well as its possession. More worshippers bend the knee in homage before the gilded god, than in reverential adoration before the Creator of all things. As a means to an end, as

the introduction to ease, independence, power and enjoyment, it is sought with insatiable avidity, and with a preliminary drudgery which would be regarded as an enslavement, were it not voluntary. The eye of avarice is sleepless and its energy indomitable. What lustre so radiant as the glitter of gold, or what music so sweet as its ring in the coffer? The measures for its acquisition may be honest, but who does not know that under its fascinating spell the most unscrupulous and fraudulent means may be resorted to? In the eager and servile pursuit, not unfrequently, its uses as a means to an end are forgotten, in the mere pleasure of accumulation—certainly the most despicable and degrading of all pleasures. The miser, who gloats

over his treasures, whose very heart contracts the rust of sordid gold, and who, in the midst of his abundance, is a pauper, is the caricature of humanity. And yet many such there are, who are tempted by the world, not like the profligate, to spend all, but merely to heap up riches for unknown and thankless heirs.*

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* Although we have principally had in view worldly persons in what are called the higher classes of society, among whom the appliances for self-gratification are the most abundant, we are far from restricting our remarks to such. The same principles of action influence persons in all grades of life, even the lowest. They are actuated by the same intense worldliness, with this difference, that they reach the end by methods less refined. Their sensual propensities are equally imperious, their love of amusements the same, and they feel the same impulse to acquire money as the chief good. There is no essential

This brief sketch may be sufficient as suggestive of the well known features of human society. As the mass moves on in the great panorama of life, it might well be questioned whether they have any serious conviction of their immortality. The grasp of the world is upon them, and there is no effort to release themselves. Its smile is courted, its frown dreaded, while its promises inspire a faith, which the higher

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difference between their cherished enjoyments and those of their superiors in station. The parquette of a theatre is separated by a trifling distance from the gallery; the stimulus of whiskey is equal to that of wine; the fiddle supplies the place of the opera; the vulgar dance is as merry as the polkas of a ball-room; and small sums purchase congenial pleasures, as well as thousands. The omnipotent sway of the world is observable alike in both.

promises of religion vainly essays to awaken. Thus captivated by the blandishments and fascinations of the present scene, celestial and eternal revelations lose their power of attraction.

The World

REGARDED IN THE LIGHT OF

REVELATION.

CHAPTER II.

E have glanced at the world from that point of view at which it is seen by its votaries. Its procession has passed before us in its holiday costume. We have not pretended to penetrate its disguises or expose its fallacies. That is reserved for future consideration. In the mean time we pro-

pose to regard it from another and higher stand-point.

When we look at the world in the light of revelation, we may at least claim from those who dispute the Divine authority of the Bible, respect for its testimony, as venerable for its antiquity and remarkable for its wisdom. Even passing by those other forms of evidence on which its pretensions are supported, the candid mind cannot but be affected by the force of the internal evidence which arises from its discriminating and truthful representations of human things. Its thorough dissection of the human heart; its penetration into the very depths of our being; its disclosure of the secret springs of action, and its graphic portraiture of life in its various

phases, evince extraordinary knowledge. If we desire to see a masterly exhibition of what man really is, we must look for it here. We must contemplate him as he is portrayed here in his degeneracy, swayed by false reason and impelled by evil passions; or as a new light dawns upon his mind, new principles of action influence him, and as he struggles, in the strength of a renovated nature, into a new and better life. We must study his character as it is influenced by hope and fear, joy and sorrow, success and disappointment, virtues and vices; or as it is shaped by heavenly or grovelling pursuits, and by the approach of death, with its attendant triumph or remorse. Has human philosophy ever thus succeeded in delineating the character of

man? Could any have done it but that omniscient One who knows, at a glance, what is in man? The Bible, embodying the experience of past ages, may safely be referred to as authority on the subject which we are illustrating. As a record of early history, a treatise on human nature, a book of the heart, it speaks both wisely and divinely.

In referring to its pages, attention is immediately arrested by the fact, that, in every page, man is regarded as a fallen and degenerate creature, changed from his primitive condition with the holy features of his character obliterated by sin. In its view, he is a bankrupt in reputation and happiness, and the world originally provided and furnished as his blissful home, is

regarded in the sombre hues which it has assumed since his apostacy—no longer his home but the place of his temporary sojourn. Its fountains have been poisoned, its elements converted into the ministers of disease and death, and when questioned it gives back the response, "this is not your rest." In accordance with this, if we trace the history of man from the period of his expulsion from paradise to the present time, we find it to be the reiterated story of vain struggles against adverse influences. We see man, contending for power, plunging into sensuality, hoarding riches, living in a vain show, courting oblivion for his cares, and when every expedient is exhausted, sinking down sorrowfully into the forgetfulness of the grave.

The biblical history of one age will apply to every age. As the eye reverts to the past it discerns through the long vista, mouldering cities, tarnished pageants, prostrate grandeur and extinct generations. We listen, but the busy activities of countless millions are quieted, and the voice of their mirth and music is hushed. Scarcely a vestige remains of their proud career. "Passing away" and "passed away" are inscribed on the monuments of the present and the past. No where else can we find such emphatic and truthful descriptions of the vanity of the world and all that it contains, as in the Holy Scriptures. In the fall, man lost communion with his Maker, and in this is comprehended the loss of all which could have contributed to his dignity and happiness.

Listen to these oracles! "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not." "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass." "The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away." "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." Such the brevity and

instability of human life. Death stands at every avenue to mock the mere earthly hope of man, and at any step in his career it may trip the eager pursuer of pleasure. While the generations of the dead silently corroborate these representations, they testify also to the vanity of the objects which now engage the worldling's attention. There is no cup of enjoyment which has not been quaffed, no form of pleasure which has not been tried in the long ages past. They have been found wanting. No one has been more favourably situated for testing the capacity of the world to satisfy man's insatiate desires, than the rich and powerful King of Israel, and no one less reluctant than he to push the experiment to the utmost limit. The

value of his recorded experience has not suffered by the lapse of time. "I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. I made me pools of water; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts; and whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works

that my hands had wrought and on the labour that I had laboured to do, and behold! all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Here the experiment was made on the largest scale, and under the most propitious circumstances, and yet the luxurious monarch, sated with enjoyment, turned away in disgust, like the capricious child from the toys which have ceased to amuse him. He felt, as all must feel who imitate his example, the utter inanity of mere earthly and sensual gratification. The soul must be extinguished and man descend to the level of the brute,

before such outward appliances can impart to him full satisfaction. They are of the earth earthy, and must utterly fail in the education of the soul, the refinement of its faculties, the exaltation of its purposes, the gratification of its lofty aspirations, and in its preparation for a more congenial sphere of existence.

The Holy Scriptures regard man in his two-fold life, the animal and spiritual, and in his two-fold relations to the present and future worlds. Detecting in the degeneracy of our nature the source of the mistaken judgment which gives prominence to things of temporary interest, while the higher ends of being are overlooked, they admonish, expostulate and threaten, for the purpose of arousing a reluctant attention.

They represent the world as under a curse which no human contrivance can counteract, and whose most nicely adjusted arrangements may, in a moment, be disturbed and confounded. Its streams are shallow and turbid, its cup mingled with wormwood and incapable of supplying even the present limited capacity for happiness. Hence the inspired cautions against that easy credulity which is disposed to put faith in worldly promises. It is not in the spirit of morbid misanthropy but of appropriate soberness we are admonished; "The time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though

they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." The men of the world adopt a different practice. They have no conception of happiness which is not dependent on these and such like arrangements. They so completely restrict themselves in this respect, that when the sources of their earthly joy fail, they plaintively exclaim, "Ye have taken away my gods and what have I left?"

To countervail this mistaken and melancholy impression, we hear the voice of the oracle: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world,

the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." Much is comprehended in the fact, that friendship with God is wholly incompatible with that of the world; for as He holds unlimited control over the material universe, we may readily see with what ease he can disappoint the expectations of those who place on it their sole dependence. Health is dependent on him; he touches it and it is irreparably impaired, and what can the sensualist do without it? He can with-

hold or withdraw wealth at his pleasure; or so divest it of its power, as a minister of good, as to make its possessor of all men the most miserable. He can interrupt the happiest social arrangements by awakened jealousies and estrangements, so as to make a man's foes those of his own household. When other circumstances are propitious, he can by some peculiarity of temper in the individual, render happiness an impossibility; or, on the contrary, he can remove all restraint, afford the fullest license, furnish all necessary appliances, and leave the worldling to work out his own miserable experience, until, in his last remnant of life, wearied and worn out with his servitude, he is left without one consolatory reflection on the past or one ray

of hope for the future. How emphatic the queries, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul," if it once be lost? Ah, with what a melancholy chiming come down to us the experiences of the past! This is their sound in the ears of the devotees to this world: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful and the end of that mirth is heaviness." "I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it"? "Rejoice O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and

in the sight of thine eyes, but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment." "They send forth their little ones like a flock and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

In this rapid and very inadequate survey, we see the estimate which God's word places on the present world, considered in its largest resources for contributing to man's happiness; and how strongly it contrasts with that which the children of men are disposed to form. Where lies the truth? We shall presently see.

The World

AS ESTIMATED BY ITS VOTARIES

AFTER A TRIAL OF ITS PURSUITS.

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CHAPTER III.

E respectfully listen to the traveller who describes the country which he has visited and inspected; and in other departments of knowledge, we are accustomed to appeal to those who, from experience, are best qualified to give us exact information. If, too, in establishing a cause, we can elicit testi-

mony from the adverse side, which would have been withheld had it not been extorted, we regard it as possessing peculiar value. In accordance with this, if we can obtain from the world a testimony against itself, and induce its votaries to acknowledge that, having explored all its resources, and tested all its expedients, in the vain search for happiness, none will deny that this is unexceptionable testimony. We interrogate the men of the world then, one by one, "Have your hopes been realized?" Let the response come from those who have made some progress, and are hence better qualified to judge, rather than from those who have just commenced the experiment. Youth is apt to be deceived by illusions which vanish as they are approached. The

sky which is bright in the morning is often overcast at noon, and wrecked with the tempest at night. The sunny radiance of youthful hope undergoes more or less obscuration as life advances. The glowing feeling, the merry laugh and the bounding spring of the boy give place to graver feeling and action in the man; and this change is not altogether attributable to maturity, with which such young feelings would be incompatible, but in a large measure to the saddening influence of successive disappointments. Experience takes the place of fancy and is a more sober teacher. Closer and longer contact with the world exposes many of its disguises and betrays the worthless tinsel which was once imagined to be burnished

gold. The paradise which had entranced us at a distance, reveals the coarsest features of the landscape on a nearer inspection. Now, whether the men of the world will express or withhold the convictions of their hearts, we can still detect in their altered tone and mein the opinion into which they have been surprised, that the world has not been true to its promise.

What the word of inspiration has so solemnly affirmed, and what Christians, who after a trial of the world have turned to higher and nobler pursuits, are ready to testify, meets with an emphatic corroboration from those who are still lured by the false glare and delusive promises of the things "which are seen and temporal." Appealing to their consciousness, if not,

to their consciences, we ask—Is the libertine happy in his successes,—and do his pleasures never pall? Is his peace never disturbed by hideous scenes and reminiscences such as made Byron acknowledge that their repetition might persuade him to put an end to them and life together? Is the boisterous mirth of the reveller always sincere, the genuine outburst of a joyous heart, or is it often assumed to drown sadder feelings?* Does not the exciting

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* Colonel Gardiner, after his remarkable and genuine conversion, acknowledged that, on one occasion, when his libertine associates loudly congratulated him as "the happy rake," he turned his eyes upon a dog just entering the room, and wished in his heart that he could exchange conditions with him. He was living in unrestrained licentiousness, with a strong and unimpaired constitution, and for this he was an

music of the dance often ring out gloomily, rather dirge-like than as a pæan of joy? At the festive board, while luxuries regale the palate and the brimming wine-cup is placed to the lips, does not apprehension often trace the mysterious hand-writing on the wall? Who, we ask, inscribed over the door of the gambler's saloon the descriptive name of "hell?" Was it done by an ignorant hand, or by those who sought in its feverish excitements an oblivion for thought or relief from previous depression? Can the theatre, amidst all its gorgeous representations, bear no testimony to the disgust and ghastly disappointment of

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object of envy, while his secret conviction was that he was degraded by the distinction which his successful vices had earned for him.

those who have resorted to it for amusement? Is the fashionable belle, radiant in her charms, always satisfied with her conquests, and never corroded by envy and jealousy? Are those who, being nauseated with the pleasures of one clime, have sought variety in those of another, always successful in their pursuit? How is it that solitude and ennui are equivalant terms to the pleasure-seeker? Why is calm and sober reflection so carefully eschewed? Or why should they affix so suspicious a name to their amusements as time-killers? These are not irrelevant questions. The heart will, as we well know, often answer truly and silently, while, not unfrequently, an open response will be extorted. The truth is felt, if not expressed, that when the gay routine is run,

there is a secret dissatisfaction which gnaws like a worm at the root. The trial may be and is repeated, only to produce a deeper conviction of the folly. The more violent the struggle, the severer the recoil. The virtue of fashionable pleasures is supposed to reside in their power to produce agreeable excitement, and to keep the animal spirits in brisk circulation; but the powers of nature flag under the exhaustive process, and the reaction is correspondingly depressive.* The strength which is unduly

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* A living author in honestly giving his impressions of the epicurean and bacchanalian carouses in which he had participated with those who boast that they know how to enjoy life, says: "And this is the stale, dull, vulgar life which thousands of men of cultivated intellects and gentle hearts, lead, day after day, and

taxed by the midnight revel, licentious indulgence, and other such exhaustive processes, staggers under the severity of the trial, and at length its recuperative power fails, and with it the capacity for enjoyment. The aching joints, the failing strength, the nerveless imbecility cause many a fast liver to fall out of the ranks, as no longer fit for service. The world has many such spectral victims, and the grave covers many more. The devotees do not live out half their days; their path

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year after year. I would rather be a methodist parson, as to the fun of the thing. It is the paltriest cheat, the most insulting delusion, to call this pleasure. Why, it is neither more nor less than the purchase of headaches on disadvantageous terms."

is strewed with the wounded and the slain, more thickly than the battle-field.*

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* Lord Chesterfield remarkable for his endowments, distinguished alike in the political and fashionable worlds, and who, without scruple, participated in every guilty pleasure, arrived at an age when his capacity for enjoyment was much impaired, and from that point made the following forcible review of his life. "I have seen the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their true value, which is, in truth, very low. Whereas those that have not experienced, always overrate them. They only see the gay outside and are dazzled at the glare. But I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pullies and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow-candles which illuminated the whole decoration, to the astonishment of the ignorant audience. When I reflect on what

We have referred to worldliness under other forms; and these when fairly estimated according to their accompaniments

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I have seen, what I have heard and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry, and bustle and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look on all that is past, as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions; and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No, for I really cannot help it. I bear it, because I must bear it whether I will or no, I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that he has become my enemy." The experience of Chesterfield is that of multitudes. He had exhausted the pleasures of the world, and having, in his scepticism, put the hopes of religion beyond his reach, he had no alternative but to sit down and brood gloomily over his total and irreparable bankruptcy. How impressive is his testimony!

and results, will be found equally insufficient for the attainment of life's great objects. The eager worshipper of mammon will sooner or later discover how unproductive is his devotion. The power of gold has its limit. Among the commodities which it may purchase, in vain do we look for elastic health, placidity of temper, contentment, pleasant reflections and retrospects, firm friendships, domestic quietude and satisfaction, and especially an exemption from that crisis which is stealthily and steadily approaching with its winding sheet and narrow abode, in utter mockery of all earthly grandeur.* The man of millions

* When the wealthy cardinal Beaufort was dying, he exclaimed, "Wherefore should I die being so

is the man of cares. Like the wearied sentinel at his post, he must be sleeplessly watchful over property which will soon belong to others, and with no other than a soldier's reward,—his daily pay and rations. Impelled by his passion for wealth, he foregoes the opportunities of converting his money to useful and laudable purposes, and drudges on in his vocation like a chained galley-slave. Wealth can purchase envy more readily than friendship; it can convert filial reverence into an ill-concealed satisfaction at a parent's death. How often is it found associated with unhappiness; and misery clothed in purple

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rich? Will not death be bribed? Will money do nothing?" There could be but one answer, "Thy money perish with thee!"

and fine linen, differs little from wretchedness clad in squalid rags. Misery may dwell in a hovel, but it has no poignancy unknown to the splendid wretchedness to be found in many a stately mansion. Money then, in itself considered, never can fulfil the promise of imparting true satisfaction to its possessor.

The same story, with a like catastrophe, is to be told of the man in public life who ambitiously struggles upwards to the highest stations of power; of the ardent student expending his mental and physical energies that he may inscribe his name high up on the scroll of fame; and of the enterprising chieftain who fights his way until he becomes the hero of a hundred battles. In politics, literature and war

there is a written and traditional history of hopes blighted, services ungratefully requited, and hearts broken. Biography, with its habitual partiality, may suppress many of the darker hues and incidents of life, and yet it discloses enough to divest the ambitious pursuits of men of their more imposing and romantic features. The statesman, alternately the object of plaudits and maledictions, is forced to tax his powers to a painful and exhausting extreme, to maintain his position against the arts of alert and powerful rivals. His fall is often as sudden as his elevation was slow, and the glory of his public service ends in involuntary retirement and chagrin.*

* The politics of all countries, not excepting our own, afford melancholy examples of the disastrous over-

The academic grove is not always one where peace and quiet reign. Literature is the resort of many for distinction rather than usefulness, and yet how often does the author step out on the public arena, with flushed hope, to be badgered by the critics, maligned by his own fraternity, unappreciated by the reading world, and to have his hopes thwarted and his sensibilities deeply wounded? The barque which is launched with flaunting streamers is not always destined to sail "on the smooth surface of a summer's sea." Poetry is

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throw and downfall of high-vaulting ambition. The denouement in Wolsey's case is well known. "Had I," said he, "but served my God as diligently as I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me now in my gray hairs."

the favourite vehicle of complaint, and many a devoted slave to the muse has uttered his plaint in mournful numbers, of the world's cruelty and ingratitude. Kneeling at the shrine of his idol, his devotion has been repaid with bitter scorn; asking for a laurel wreath, he has received a whip of scorpions.

We have seen too the military chieftain, with strategic skill and prowess acknowledged, after escaping the perils of battle, outliving public notice, superseded by younger aspirants, and left to nurse his wounds in solitude. And what is the sum of his happiness? After the ardour of pursuit has cooled down, do sacked towns, ghastly wounds, dying groans, and the wails of bereaved widows and orphans form

the best materials for agreeable reminiscences? Who would accept the fame of a Cæsar or an Alexander, of a Charles or a Napoleon with all their responsibility for blood shed? Thus it is in all the pursuits of ambition; the thousands fail and the few succeed, and they that do succeed, find to their chagrin that they have spent life in chasing an unreal phantom. The highest attainable stations are but dizzy heights calculated to awaken apprehension and fear. Monarchs are proverbially the most unhappy of men, and least to be envied. The secret history of those who have worn the insignia of royalty, is a sad chapter in human life. Their position, from its cares and responsibilities, is less to be coveted than that of the humblest subject; and with all their

surroundings of grandeur, they must—most humiliating thought,—die like the common herd.*

We have already seen that the spirit of the world infects the lower as well as the higher classes of society. It is the same web, although of coarser fabric. They have the same views of the world's sufficiency, and are impelled by the same sensualism. May we not say, with the same results?

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* Philip III. of Spain, when dying is said to have exclaimed! "Oh! would to God, I had never reigned! Oh, that those years I have spent in my kingdom, I had lived a solitary life in the wilderness! Oh, that I had lived a life alone with God! How much more secure should I now have died! With how much more confidence should I now have gone to the throne of God! What doth all my glory profit, but that I have so much the more torment in my death!"

Victims of intemperance, prowlers upon society, disturbers of the peace, how often does their devotion to the world terminate in incurable vice and poverty, in the almshouse and prison? The world treats them roughly, and at last shakes them off as deluded fools, who in despite of warning have rushed on the shoals already strewed with the wrecks of their predecessors.

In strongly defining the illustrative cases which we have employed, we do not design to exclude the more numerous and less marked ones which lie between the extremes of high fashion and low life. We are fully aware that many, imbued with the spirit of the world, occupy the middle rank, and pursue a more moderate and even tenor, mingling the claims of business and pleas-

ure. They have no thought of the life to come, and yet from educational restraint, or limited means, they exhibit little of the impetuosity which characterizes the persons already referred to. Still they are one with them in general principle. They live only for the present. Happy family arrangements, competence, influence, ease and general enjoyment are their object, and yet, with more moderate expectations and less excessive expenditure, this world is their idol, and no plans are arranged beyond its limits. The result is of course the same, although, from the character of the persons, less distinctly marked. Sooner or later they are disappointed; no high end is achieved, and as the sands of life run low they are apt to awake to the conviction that

"He builds too low who builds beneath the skies."*

If these representations be truthful it might be asked, Why should not the world become wiser? Why should not men aban-

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* We fall into a serious mistake when we undertake to estimate men from their public appearance. Each one has his secret history, which he endeavours carefully to conceal from the scrutiny of others. Could this secret history be revealed, we should be almost tempted to believe that all pretences of happiness among the irreligious are counterfeit and hypocritical. How many painful feelings, how many dark broodings, how many desperate resolves, would be exposed! Loss of property, treachery of pretended friends, maddened disappointment, corroding jealousies, and such like, scare sleep from many a pillow. Remorse, too, has possession of many hearts, and we know nothing of it and of a thousand other secret causes of unhappiness, until we see them making frightful inroads upon health, or driving men to desperation and suicide.

don that, the futility of which has been so often demonstrated? We reply, the vanity of the world is a demonstrable truth. It was acknowledged of old time, and the lapse of centuries has produced no change; and yet the same vain course is run with the same uniform results. There are reasons:

1st. The race of men appear on the stage of action in successive and short-lived generations. The places of the retiring are soon filled by their successors; who, possessing the same vitiated nature with all its characteristic passions and temperaments, are disposed to act for themselves, without norrowly enquiring into the experience of the past. Even with a full knowledge of the failures of their prede-

cessors, it might be convenient for them to attribute them rather to accident than necessity. They might have been improvident, or unwisely selected their means for the accomplishment of their purposes, or the state of things may have undergone a material change; and they think that with better management they would succeed whatever had been the fate of others. Every natural man is wise in his own conceit, and every one imagines that he possesses the power of self-restraint. He fixes a limit and promises that thus far he will go and no further, until having fairly committed himself to the current he is carried forward with an impetuosity which he at length finds he has no power to control.

2d. It is to be remembered, too, as we

have already remarked that the tastes and habits of worldlings are formed in the earliest and most thoughtless period of life. Even in the tenderest youth we detect the proclivities which characterize the future man. These are shaped and strengthened in each successive year, until the habit becomes the atmosphere in which alone he breathes easily. The longer a man's contact with the world, the more formidable the impediments to a change of character. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The better principles of nature become paralyzed, its better feelings indurated, and there is no disposition to pause or turn back.

3d. A potent cause for adhering, at all events, to the world, may be found in the religious scepticism, which is at first assumed as an expedient to quiet the voice of conscience, rather than from deliberate conviction. It is a rejection of the whole system of religion, or such a perversion of it as will awaken no apprehensions of its righteous retributions. In the scheme of the worldling, God is wholly indifferent to the actions of men, or he is too merciful to hold them to a rigid account. The whole temper and constitution of the Christian system are so uncongenial with the mind that is intent on self-gratification, that it has no beauty that it should be desired. The rigid ethics of the gospel are distasteful to one in this position; and as the choice

lies between the license of the world and the self-control which the gospel enjoins, the former with all its delusions and inanities is still adhered to as the better choice. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith," and yet he that has adopted infidel sentiments, has madly cast away this only weapon of victory. He is either unwilling to believe, or by an unhappy obliquity of mind, cannot believe, and hence clings to the world. The substitution of faith for scepticism implies a revolution of sentiments and habits. Old things pass away, behold all things become new. Charity for censoriousness, self-denial for licentiousness, purity for defilement, submission to God for obstinate self-will, spirituality for earthly—mindedness, the defer-

red joys of heaven for the sensual pleasures of time, indicate some features of the change. Even then, when the suspicion is awakened that the course now pursued is a mistake, the worldling feels as if he had no other resource than to proceed. His practical as well as theoretical scepticism excludes the religion of the gospel as an alternative; and soured and chafed as he may be, at the failure of his chosen pursuits to bring peace and contentment, he multiplies the dull and guilty repetition of his pleasures, and adventures all on the stake. The world is thus the object of his dissatisfied idolatry, as if there were no other object of worship.

It can be no object with us to exaggerate these statements. We do not wish to be

understood as affirming that the convictions of the worldly are in all cases equally strong; or that at all times they confess to themselves the folly of their course; for it is acknowledged that many, even for a long series of years, preserve their zest for earthly pleasures unimpaired; and under favouring associations, with talents adapted for success, and health still vigorous, they may be beguiled and led onward cheerfully, as if disappointment were impossible. Still, however, under the most propitious circumstances, conviction will be forced on the mind, that the satisfaction, which provides not for the urgent demands of the soul and furnishes no antidote to the fears of death, is more superficial, than substantial. The questions will arise, What am I

living for? What profit have I in all my labour? To what ultimate end of happiness am I progressing? Do I not often feel life to be a burden? The most favoured and prospered cannot fail to see, as they advance in years, how many pleasant associations have been broken up; how many of their choice companions have disappeared from the scene, even before they had reached their prime; how many friendships have proved false;* and, in how

* It has often struck us as one of the most melancholy illustrations of the insincerity of worldly friendships, particularly among young men, that the most trivial quarrels often lead to deadly feuds. The recollection of every one will furnish instances of intimate *friends*, so called, repairing to the field to settle a trifling dispute by shedding each other's blood. The world that can exact obedience to a code of honour, so heartless and bloody, is surely not the young man's friend.

many instances, they have shrunk away spiritless from their dearest engagements, as falling far short of their anticipations. Or, at all events, when their strength decays, and their animal spirits flag, and an inevitable death stands at the door, sternly and relentlessly resolved to fulfil his commission, can they confidently feel that their compensation has been satisfactory? Do cheerful reflections arise on the review of life, and that calm self-approbation which constitutes the sweet solace of declining years? Does not the past flit before them like the visions of a disturbed and confused dream, and the future salute them as a dark apparition, or glare upon them with its frightful forebodings? Surely that course cannot be rightly chosen which will

not bear the close interrogations of conscience; nor that life be well spent which has no outbeaming brightness to impart lustre to the tomb.

The World

IN COMPARISON

WITH THE BETTER WAY.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOULD this little treatise fall under the eye of any who are disposed to pause in their worldly career to question their own hearts and take a calm review of life, it will afford us peculiar gratification to invite their attention to the BETTER WAY. Aware of the prejudice, from whatever

cause, which is entertained against religion and its professors, it may be well, as a preliminary step, to obviate the objections which are founded on the character and conduct of Christians in the world. It may plausibly be urged, if Christianity be the better way, why should not those who profess to be influenced by it, conform more strictly to its rules, and exhibit more of the happiness which it is said to inspire?

In regard to the objection which arises from the imperfections and inconsistencies of professing Christians, we would, without any attempt at concealment or palliation, suggest an important distinction for the purpose of averting the infliction of unjust censure. There is a class of nominal

Christians whose religion is one of form merely. It may have been assumed deliberately, as a hypocritical disguise, for mercenary and sinister purposes; or on the principle of compromise with a troublesome conscience; or through ignorant and mistaken views of its true character and requirements; but with whatever purpose, the assumption is merely nominal. They have clothed themselves in the livery of religion, while their heart is not in the service; they are still in the world, for they have never sincerely renounced its pomps and vanities. Religion does not claim them, neither should it be responsible for their misconduct. To the tender mercies of the world we are willing to leave them. There is another class, however, whose sincerity may not be

questioned, who, in a greater or less degree, fail in their exemplification of the spirit and temper of the gospel. No Christian is perfect in this life. He carries about with him a body of sin and death,—a condition as necessarily involving moral deficiencies, as it does physical infirmities. He is in a state of tutelage, learning his lessons gradually and making progress slowly; and compared with the perfect standard proposed for his imitation in the precepts and life of Jesus, he is found to fall immeasurably short of a perfect obedience. The principle of a new life infused into him, is only partially developed. This we urge in explanation, rather than extenuation; and we only wish it to apply to those who, failing as they

often do, are still striving, and not without success, to attain to the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. As for those who tax their ingenuity to contrive a way of maintaining friendship with both worlds, prosecuting schemes of ambition, pursuing wealth as a chief good, or paying homage to it when possessed by others, mingling in the amusements of the world as far as it may be done with safety to their public reputation, or condescending to unworthy artifices for the promotion of their personal popularity and aggrandizement, we note them as just so far compromising their Christian reputation, forsaking the safety of the narrow way, imperilling their own hopes and enjoyments, and exposing themselves to those severe chastisements by

which God is wont to restore his prodigal children to their right mind. While we lament the necessity of acknowledging that there are too many points of apparently amicable contact between the church and the world, there is still a wide and radical difference between the two. There is much hidden excellence in every true Christian, and no just estimate can be formed of him without some acquaintance with his interior life. If Christianity is to be judged by the conduct of its disciples, it may at least in equity be demanded, that the best and not the worst specimens should be selected—those most imbued with its spirit and most successful in coming up to the spirit of its requisitions, instead of those whose delinquencies can only prove that they have

failed to exemplify its principles. When, however, we would direct the attention of worldlings to the better way, it is to the way itself, rather than to the travellers in it; it is to the perfect and divine system as unfolded in the gospel and as illustrated in the life of its Author. We can safely follow Christians only so far as they follow Christ.

As to the other point in the objection, that Christianity fails to fulfil its promise in rendering its disciples happy, and hence the discouragement in embracing it as an alternative, we are ready to admit, that to a casual observer, it may seem that Christians have few joys and many sorrows; their countenanecs are often saddened; their tears flow; like other men they have

their pains, griefs and disappointments, and receive no apparent compensation for their numerous sacrifices. It is very true that they are not exempt from the sorrows of life. Their imperfect and mortal condition does not admit of it, neither does religion promise it. Their physical weaknesses and moral deficiencies adhere to them as a consequence of a depraved nature and the disorganized condition of their faculties. There is, however, this peculiarity in their trials, that they are at once disciplinary and salutary; they tend to make them better and holier men; and they are, besides, accompanied by unusual supports, and brightening anticipations of that "rest which remaineth." He that becomes a sufferer in the world's service has no inter-

nal sources of support and comfort; the world failing him, everything fails; while the Christian, on the contrary, can recognize a paternal hand in all his sorrows, and can trace them all to a benevolent design to amend his character and fit him for a higher sphere of blessedness. Paradoxical as it may appear to the uninitiated, it is a well settled maxim in the Christian's experience, that he may be "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." "By honour and dishonour; by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, and yet always rejoic-

ing; as poor, and yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." These are combinations, not incompatibilities, in Christian experience. There is perfect harmony in their seeming opposition. The believer in Christ has an outward and inward life; his hopes counterbalance his fears; his joys outweigh his sorrows; in the conscience void of offence to God and man, he experiences "the soul's calm sunshine and the heart-felt joy;" and as his path brightens more and more to its close, he furnishes a marked contrast to the man of the world, who has here no adequate alleviation to his sorrows, and whose sun goes down in impenetrable gloom.

Having disposed of these preliminary

objections, we would, with the revelation of God in our hand, say to wanderers in "forbidden paths,"—"This is the way, walk ye in it." The religion of Jesus Christ, claiming a divine origin, deserves and demands an impartial examination. It is neither just nor magnanimous to set it aside on the prejudiced report of others, or on the ground of superficial and unimportant difficulties. As a moral system it should be compared with the most prominent philosophical systems; and as a revelation of salvation it should be brought into juxtaposition with every other religious scheme, which offers an antidote to human suffering, or holds out a promise to the aspirations of hope. If upon impartial examination it fails to sustain its pretensions, its rejec-

tion will be reasonable; under any other circumstances it would be perilous.

It is a mistake to suppose that the gospel appeals rather to the credulity than the intelligence of men. It addresses itself to our highest reason, our dearest hopes, the best feelings of our humanity. It courts scrutiny, provided it be thorough and unprejudiced; and it is a fact not to be overlooked that many in every nation, in all ages, of every diversity of custom, language and talents have not only admitted its credibility as a divine revelation, but have adventured their immortal hopes on its promises. Although the determinations of others may not be regarded as conclusive in the way of argument, it may be presumed that men so differently circumstanced and

alike estimable for their moral qualities and intellectual capabilities, would not have hazarded their dearest interests by a rash belief in a fable, however cunningly devised.* This, however, is not the place to enter upon so wide a field of enquiry. Our object is not a formal demonstration of the truth of the Bible. The appliances for such an investigation are within the reach of all, and the serious enquirer may find

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* We might readily cite a multitude of names which have adorned every department of human science, in proof that the evidences supporting the divine origin of the Christian religion have commended themselves to the reason of men under the highest culture. Credulity will scarcely be charged on such men as John Milton, Sir Isaac Newton, John Locke, Robert Boyle, and Sir William Jones, who professed to rest their hopes on the truth of the Christian system.

the arguments for the Christian religion luminously presented by many writers of distinguished ability.* The scepticism of men of the world is, for the most part, more superficial than argumentative; adopted rather to silence the disturbing and annoying upbraidings of conscience, than from deliberate conviction. The considerations which we have to urge will be sufficient, if they can pierce through this flimsy armour of defence. On the presumption that there are always some of this class

* Without pretending to enumerate even the chief of these, in which the subject has been treated in every possible aspect, and with regard to all the varying forms of infidelity, it may not be asking too much of the reader to solicit his perusal of Paley, and Dr. Archibald Alexander, on the Evidences of Christianity.

who, from personal experience, are dissatisfied with the course of life they have pursued, and that the prospects of happiness, which were once so alluring, have proved visionary and fallacious, we are encouraged to address them in the language of expostulation. We would say to them, Pause and reflect; take a calm review of the past; recall the scenes in which you have been participators; weigh them deliberately, and examine well the results, and then ask if they are vindicated by reason, or approved by your better judgment. When you remember the time squandered in mere amusements, and the talents misapplied in the acquisition of possessions which you dare not imagine to be permanent; or, when you recall the sensual indulgences into

which impetuous passion has hurried you, can you deliberately commend their frivolity and criminality? Do no painful reminiscences obtrude themselves, when you reflect upon the character of your associates, some of whom, at least, have from time to time, left their places vacant, and prematurely finished their earthly career, without one soothing influence from religious hope? Have you seduced none into sin, who are now beyond the reach of restoration? Have you pleasure in the prospect of meeting your gay and guilty companions in that future world, where character will be tested by the strictest rules of virtue? Compare yourselves as you now are, with what you once were, in the days of comparative innocence. Are you not sensible of a

material deterioration in your character, from your close association with the world—with a less distinct appreciation of right and wrong, with fewer good impulses, with principles less pure and exalted? With a natural conscience, not wholly overpowered; a conviction, not yet extinguished, that this life is not the whole, or chief part, of your being; an unwillingness to admit the fearful dogma, that at death you will cease to exist; and with some dim trace of light from the religious truth which you may have heard, can you believe that in forgetting God and refusing to render him homage; in neglecting prayer, and dismissing from your mind all reference to an eternal world and your accountability there, you have acted as rational and immortal beings

should have acted? What! partaking daily of God's bounty without an emotion of gratitude! Receiving your being from God, and yet no recognition of his providence! Destined to live for ever, and yet regardless of all preparation for the great transition!

We ask again, that you should compare the life you are now living with that which religion enjoins, and judge whether the latter, in all its distinguishing features, is not commended as far more consonant with the dignity and destiny of your nature. The religion of Jesus Christ is not to be regarded as a mere philosophy, although it is that in the purest and highest sense; its chief characteristic is its revelation of the only way of salvation. It brings life and

immortality to light. It coincides with our own conviction that our nature has been radically disordered and needs reparation; that it is subject to the lures of temptation, prone to sin, exposed to death, and obnoxious to future judgment. To secure this renovation, the Son of God, in the spirit of a divine benignity, became incarnate, that he might not only be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but become our surety and substitute, to make reparation for us and reconcile us to God. In his personal and perfect obedience even to death the law of God received ample vindication, its claims were satisfied, and the justification of the sinner became possible. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions and

bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." In the testament which he left behind him, provision is made for the pardon of the penitent and the salvation of the believing. In view of these simple and encouraging statements, in which God is represented as condescending to men, and soliciting them to accept the gift of eternal life, is it not eminently reasonable that we should repent of that, which even our natural conscience acknowledges to be sinful, and with a believing confidence rely upon a promise of mercy so sincerely made and so adapted to our exigencies? Pernicious as the influence of the world is, it seldom, except in extreme cases, so deadens the moral sense, as to

make men wholly regardless of their salvation. We see this in their reserved intention to repent at some future time, or in their present notion that, without any thorough amendment of their lives, they may trust in the general mercy of God. How much more reasonable to repent *now*, than to defer it to an uncertain future; and how much safer to trust to the revealed mercy of God, as we find it in the gospel of Jesus Christ, than to a fancied clemency of which we have no satisfactory proof!

To this we may be encouraged, not only by the positive promise of God, but by the fact that this course has proved eminently efficacious in the case of others, who have found "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" the precursors

of a peace of mind before unknown to them. It is through this vestibule that they have entered on the Better Way. Pardon and acceptance with God through the mediation of Christ, constitute the commencement of a new life—a life of progressive happiness. When the transition is once effected, men marvel that they should have been deluded by the false and deceitful lures of the world so long; and after being tossed on a sea of passion, the sport of every veering wind, and cheated out of their fondest hopes, they are gladdened to find, when they least expected it, a haven of rest.

It should be distinctly borne in mind that the religion of Jesus Christ, when rightly apprehended and applied, is a

remedy adapted to the disorders of our nature. The "whole head sick, and the whole heart faint," are brought under its curative power. Sin is remitted, guilt cancelled, and as the moral pressure is removed, the faculties awake to their appropriate exercise. Good and evil are no longer confounded, but assume by clearly marked peculiarities, their antagonistic attitude. Reason learns to assert its supremacy over passion; judgment corrects the false estimates by which we have been led to prefer the world to God; and the mind, purged of its gross misapprehensions, and liberated from its subserviency to the flesh, finds higher and purer channels for its thoughts. The change effected in the corporeal frame by a restoration from malig-

nant and prostrating disease, furnishes but a faint emblem of the revolution effected in the moral and spiritual nature, by the power of the Spirit of God. The difficulty lies in conveying any intelligible notion of it to one who has not experienced it. It is not only a healing of our nature but a renewal of it, a resurrection from the dead, "old things pass away, behold, all things become new." The change radically affects our opinions, our emotions, our views of life, our conduct. The principle of a new life implanted directs the soul to nobler objects of pursuit; instead of countenancing the degrading indulgence of the sensual tastes for ever imperious and unsatisfied, it contemplates the higher aims of our nature, urging onward the earnest struggles of the

soul to find its way back to God, and to its own primitive happiness and glory. When we learn to obey the behests of conscience, to provide for the mind suitable subjects for thought, and to repress wrong and cultivate right emotions of heart, we become at once conscious of rising in the scale of being. When the Divine Being, once the object of dread and aversion, becomes the object of reverent attachment in his attributes, law and government, and we learn devoutly to worship him, and maintain communion of spirit with him—the prelude to the holier service and purer joys of the heavenly world—a happiness is begun on earth, to which earth can offer no parallel; a happiness not superficial but solid, not transient, but permanent, not exhausting, but refresh-

ing, and, unlike that of the world, satisfying the heart and entailing no saddening and remorseful reflections.

We put it then to the worldling himself:—who is engaged in the most rational and dignified pursuits, the votary of worldly pleasures, or the aspiring candidate for heaven? Contrast their feelings, their conduct, and the respective issues, and say which has made the wise choice and has the fairest promise.

In the contrasted view we have been taking, we wish to hold up more specifically the pre-eminence of the religion of Christ, as a rule of life, in contra-distinction to the jejune morality of the world. As a system of morals it has extorted the applause of

many who repudiated its claims as a divine revelation.*

Bring it to the most rigid test, and the more illustrious will it appear. No human philosophy has approached its ethical perfection. For self-government and for the regulation of conduct in the various relations of life, its directions are comprehensive and exact. Its control is not despotic

* Many remarkable testimonies of this kind might be quoted; we will content ourselves with the single one of Lord Bolingbroke, who was an avowed sceptic. He says: "No religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, as the Christian. The Gospel of Christ is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, benevolence, and universal charity. Supposing Christianity to be a human invention, it is the most amiable and successful invention that ever was imposed on mankind for their good."

but benevolent; it demands no self-sacrifice which is not reasonable and salutary, and requires no service which is not attended by its own reward. They who have submitted most unreservedly to its dictation, are the readiest to testify, that the service of God is the most perfect freedom; and the more deeply they have been imbued with its spirit, the more distinguished have they become for the observance of all relative duties, as the best men, the trustiest citizens, the purest patriots, in the domestic circle and in public life. They have been distinguished, too, by their complacent delights, as well as their exultant hopes. There can be no more grave error than the common opinion that the present life of the Christian is all hardship, and

that his enjoyments are all prospective. He is not required to refrain from one true enjoyment of the present life; it is only from its factitious and demoralizing ones. He may use the world;—he is only enjoined not to abuse it. True it is, that as his virtue is only partial, and his obedience imperfect, his happiness cannot be perfect. His sins of short-coming will be attended by trials, and these very trials, are designed as a discipline to promote his growth in virtue; yet with all these unavoidable drawbacks, the conscientious followers of Christ are ready to verify the Scriptural declaration that "although no chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that

are exercised thereby." The highest morality is accompanied by the purest enjoyment. The higher the Christian rises, above the influences of the world, in his observance of all God's commandments, the clearer his intellect, the more expanded his views, the more vigorous the exercise of his mental and moral faculties, the more agreeable his emotions, the more emphatic the approval of his conscience.

It may be said, too, of the Christian that he does not live in daily apprehension that death will despoil him of all his treasures, and put an end to life and enjoyment together. This is the wormwood and the gall mingled in the worldling's cup; while the believer's riches are treasured up in heaven, and death in his case, is but the

introduction into a full and perfect possession. There is an end which can neither be evaded nor averted. He that cannot keep his eye steadily fixed on it, furnishes the evidence by that very fact, that he is not applying life to its proper purposes.* If there were no hereafter, the determination would be less revolting, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" but when the present life is acknowledged to be the mere beginning of an existence which is to be endless, the folly and rashness of overlooking the future, must be apparent. The

* The celebrated Cæsar Borgia when compelled to contemplate the near approach of death, mournfully exclaimed, "I have provided, in the course of my life, for everything except death, and now alas! I am to die, although entirely unprepared."

uncertainty of life is proverbial. It is a battle in which multitudes fall at the first onset, still others as the contest progresses, until few remain who deserve the name of veterans. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away." The hard usage to which the world subjects its votaries permits few to reach the extreme limit, and those that do, find that they have not only outlived their pleasures, but the familiar companions of their follies and sins. What spectacle more melancholy than an old age of irreligion! A dreary sunset of life, with no ray of hope to irradiate it! The past furnishes no refresh-

ing recollections, the present no joys, the future is enveloped in clouds and darkness. Life to them has been more than a failure. Better if they had never been born. None of the great purposes of life have been accomplished. The world is shaking them off, and they have no anchor-hold for eternity!* On the contrary the "hoary head is a crown of glory when found in the way of righteousness." "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more

* Gibbon, the distinguished historian and sceptic, on the near approach of death, acknowledged that when he considered worldly things, they were all fleeting; when he looked back, they had been fleeting; when he looked forward all was dark and doubtful. This was a dreary summary of a life which might have been as distinguished for goodness as it was for cavilling unbelief, and might have closed in joyful anticipations, as it did in gloomy forebodings.

and more to the perfect day." The obedient disciple of Christ may die in his youth, but to him death is never untimely, as the great end of life is accomplished; or he may live to experience many years of earthly vicissitude, out of which he shall eventually come as a conqueror, with the exulting exclamation, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me in that day."* Reluctant as the men of

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* The excellent and truly devoted Dr. Payson, when dying and exulting in the prospect, exclaimed: "The battle is fought! the battle is fought! The victory is won! the victory is won for ever! I am going to bathe in an ocean of purity, and benevolence, and happiness, to all eternity."

the world may be to engage in the service of Christ, with what they esteem its onerous work and painful self-denial, a disquieted conscience will extort from them the wish, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

This then, reader, is the Better Way, which, with a benevolent regard to your welfare, we urge upon your choice. None that have selected it have repented their decision, while thousands have been constrained, when too late, to utter their unavailing regrets that the favourable opportunity of securing its advantages has been suffered to pass away, neglected and misimproved. Warned alike by both, it will be wise in you to pause and consider. You are cheated by a gilded pageant and

lured by false lights. Your mightiest efforts can secure but a small part of the world and for a brief time; but if you could secure the whole by imperiling your souls, what would it profit you? Remember that the Lord who is offended by your rebellion, holds your life in his hand and can at any moment recall it; that he controls the providential arrangements of the world, and may so order them as to defeat your most cherished projects; nay, that he is the Master of your mind and heart, and may at his pleasure render your enjoyments distasteful and nauseating. Why not then secure his friendship?

THE END.

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